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THE END OF ORTHODOXY AND THE CATHOLICISM OF TOMORROW

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A well-known Roman Catholic review recently observed that modernism is not merely an internal difficulty of the Catholic church, but that the Protestant and Jewish bodies are likewise tormented and undermined by it. And the remark is certainly correct. For if, on the one hand, modernism tends to apply to the internal discipline and rites of the Roman church many of those reforms which the Protestants adopted from the beginning of the Reformation,—reforms rendered necessary by the changed conditions of the times, and today even more necessary than ever,—on the other hand it is profoundly modifying the very concept of revelation and making more and more difficult every kind of stability of doctrine and every *regula fidei*; so that Christianity itself, and the Jewish religion from which it comes, are to a large extent challenged by it and are in a measure associated with the church of Rome in one common defence. This defence, so far as it has any probability of success, thus tends to change not only the relation of these religions to the spirit of contemporary thought, but even their inter-relations, constraining them to abandon one or another of those positions which caused dissension and associating them under the protection of their common spiritual inheritance. Hence it will be worth while to consider briefly what conclusions are suggested by the most recent experience in this controversy, and what forecast we can make, not so much for the future of the individual churches as for a future of much greater interest, that, namely, of Christianity itself and of the religious consciousness among the nations of western civilization.

I. MODERNISM AND MODERNISTS

Modernism is a vague and ambiguous word that readily lends itself to misunderstandings. To make the problem clearer, we need to ask ourselves:

1. Which of the scientific conclusions and practical concepts that contradict, or seem to contradict, the doctrines of the Christian religion and the requirements of the Christian bodies are firmly assured or have any great probability of prevailing in the end?

2. What situation will result from the acceptance of such conclusions by these bodies and their incorporation into doctrine and practice?

3. If, this situation being given, it is possible to retain intact the essential elements of Christianity, what then must be elucidated and defined?

4. What progress will these essential elements make in their development and action, and what changes in the internal structure of the churches and in their various relations can be foreseen as likely to follow?

The problem, as will be seen, is a vast one; to cover all the ground would call for an extended discussion, and would tax the capacity of men better prepared by profound study and wide experience. But some not unhelpful observations may be made within the modest limits of a brief article, after the intense agitation of these last few years and now that the crisis has been precipitated through the action of that very authority who has been compelled by fear to exalt herself *ad absurdum*.

A preliminary statement seems necessary and natural. Modernism, while it sincerely desires to be an internal movement for reform within the different churches and within Christianity, and while it is not opposed to the churches, so as to wish to abandon them and come out from them (as indeed would have been so easy), accepts neither one nor the other of the two classical positions,—neither docile submission to authority, to antiquity, to doctrines petrified in formulas and vigilantly guarded, nor yet abandonment, negation, resolute and entire, and war.

It wishes to be, and this is what characterizes it, a consummation and a synthesis. It accepts Christianity, but with an acceptance that examines, discriminates, judges, and therefore is in some degree the exercise of sovereignty; it is immersed in the modern spirit, has possessed itself of all the means for analysis and research invented or perfected by the modern mind, profited by all the conclusions of investigation, today so rapid and energetic, and it wishes to emerge with a rejuvenated Christianity of its own which shall not deny or ignore the present age and the tests which that imposes, but shall come forth from those tests better fitted to influence life and direct it to its highest ends. The adherents of orthodoxy are saying, it is true, that this is a sort of cunning hypocrisy on the part of the modernists, in order more surely to destroy Christianity; but no calm judge will be able easily to believe in a wickedness at once so exquisite and so nearly useless.

We do not deny that certain individuals who have arrived at negations incompatible with Christianity have called themselves modernists, and that others, modernists for a certain length of time, that is, as long as they deemed it possible to reconcile the results of their researches with religious faith in Christ and his message, have later been carried by the logic of their individual thinking beyond the confines of every positive belief. The latter is the case with A. Loisy; as is the former with the Roman modernists of *Nova et vetera*, who have nearly all remained anonymous. But whether these extremists be set aside or voluntarily give way or drop into the background, Catholicism is nevertheless a prey to the anguish of a profound internal revolution.

The conditions within which the development of the modernist movement among Catholics has been restricted since the encyclical *Pascendi* do not permit us to draw from the number and activity of its followers any deduction as to its vitality. The fundamental principle of the modernists, that they will remain in the church as long as this is not made impracticable by the excessive pretensions of the curia, together with their dignity and sincerity, constrain them to conceal themselves, and in part to change either the direction of their studies or the plane and method of their writings. In France, for instance, LeRoy,

Fonsegrive, Blondel, Laberthonnière, Bureau, Batiffol, Lagrange, and several others, a distinguished galaxy of Catholic modernists, have all remained Catholics, and have either left off writing or increased their care not to collide with the suspicions of orthodoxy. But this does not prevent their thought, for him who knows it, from far transcending the limits of old official Catholicism and of the orthodoxy of Pius X, and from becoming the leaven of profound transformations, while they, meantime, await more favorable conditions for expanding perchance into a new bloom both of writings and of practical activity.

Since, therefore, we are unable, or find it insufficient and dangerous, to judge of the movement by the number of its leaders and followers, we must seek to form our estimate of it from its content. And the problem is that which we have already stated, whether modernism is in a position to succeed in the task of preserving the essential elements of Christianity as a doctrine of life and a society of believers, and of making it once more a great directive force for human society in harmony with all the forces which are today working for the improvement and uplifting of humanity.

II. THE END OF CLERICALISM

The cause of Catholicism, and even, in part, of the orthodox churches, would be lost if these were without the vigor to adapt themselves to the state of separation which is slowly becoming more general, and which will necessarily become universal through the advances of democracy itself. But let it be noted that we are not speaking of separation in the too radical sense which the word has acquired in France. The state, as the sole fountain and organ of the law, will always have to intervene to fix the conditions and judicial forms within which the religious communities may live and develop; and since historic law is never the pure incarnation of an abstract principle, but is determined in its development by the influence of human wills, practical situations, and concrete interests, therefore the state, in legislating for and governing the religious bodies, will ever give heed to practical considerations of expediency dictated by that degree of trust which

it has in the religious communities. Hence separation does not require that the state and the church should be constituted as autonomous sources of law for all that severally concerns each, possessing a divided sovereignty, and proceeding in mixed matters by negotiations and agreements, as was the case under the separation of powers in the Middle Ages, when there was almost a division of legal jurisdiction. Religion is, and evermore will be seen to be, the unfolding of free activities among the citizens, proceeding from the innermost fibres of the human personality and hostile to any interference whatever that tends to violate personality and pervert its expression and its aims. The state will content itself with offering to religion the legal forms of outward life, not interfering in the content of the individual faiths, and will treat these with perfect impartiality, as long as they do not offend commonly accepted moral and social principles or become a peril to public order.

Catholicism and certain established churches in this or that country may show repugnance to renouncing a position of privilege and the advantages which ecclesiastical orders (rather than true piety) obtain from the protection and favor of the civil power; but no one would now venture to say that, in general, churches cannot live and develop in a state of liberty, since in other countries they have promptly adapted themselves to it and have found their advantage in it. Political clericalism, therefore, against which in several countries the modernists have to struggle, is certainly not an insurmountable obstacle to the attainment of their ends; we may rather say that, if that were all, special grounds of hope for the future of the churches could be drawn from the spectacle of its more and more general collapse.¹

And the question, still so much debated among Catholics, of how to reconcile this transition of the church from privilege to liberty with the pretensions of the Holy See so solemnly and tenaciously affirmed in the *Syllabus* and in later documents, some of them very recent, can have importance solely for the apologists

¹Of clericalism I have written at length elsewhere; see, for example, *La politica clericale e la democrazia*, Rome, 1909; and *Della religione, della chiesa e dello stato*, Milan, 1910.

of the Roman curia and the champions of its policy; it has none for him who looks to the future and investigates the signs of the times.²

III. THE RELIGION OF THE SPIRIT

On the other hand, the cause would certainly have been lost for Catholicism and for the Christian churches, if that conception of life had been destined finally to prevail which, invoking scientific principles and methods, gives a secondary and subordinate importance to conscience and spirit and moral law, and puts the human "soul" in direct, deterministic dependence on the biological and economic conditions of existence. While Christianity says, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" this view of life says, "Your soul is a by-product; win your place in the world of happiness, of riches, and of force, and a soul will be given you in addition." The former demands that a lofty ethical aim be set in the centre of the inner life and made the sun of the moral personality, redeeming itself from enslaving externals and ascending to the liberty that is sovereignty and dominion. The latter places the laws of life and human development outside of man, and finds the secret of success in adaptation to one's environment and joyous self-expansion.

It is true that a pantheistic interpretation of the universe has diminished in the eyes of many the brutality of this doctrine, declaring that the supreme and ineluctable laws of life fulfil deterministically and of themselves a kind of divine fate. But the interpretation is insufficient to cover the ruinous effects of materialism; and moreover it has not been understood or heeded by the majority. In practice, all that world of laws and ends which offers itself as a training for liberty and as a system of ideal and absolute values for the government of men's consciences, is here set aside.

In comparison with such doctrines and such advice, the old

²See the volume of P. Laberthonnière, *Positivisme et catholicisme*, in which a laborious attempt is made to soften the famous distinction between the thesis (the exclusive right of Catholicism) and the counter-thesis (religious liberty), in so far as it is justified by peculiar historical conditions and so made tolerable.

positive religions, with their fund of mystic experience accumulated through the ages, their methods of moulding the spirit, their sound idealistic doctrines, have appeared as the preservers of blessings without which human civilization would have encountered most serious losses and been in danger of exhaustion.

The attempts that have been made to devise a lay system of morality, a religion of duty, a human solidarity, and a virtue which should appear and be accepted as the finest consummation of an enlightened utilitarianism, have been the endeavor of but a few individuals or of limited groups, and have not passed current in the market of social values. In practice, this new doctrine brought spiritual impoverishment, dissipation of energy, the stifling of lofty purposes and responsibilities in the desire for positive and immediate enjoyments; and it was easy to verify the pernicious effects of this tendency in the young, in the classes, in the societies, which took it for their guide. The churches were therefore strengthened by the moral weakness of their adversary. Even the families of atheists and worldlings continued to send their children to the schools of the clergy, because they knew that there a powerful principle of moral education was at work and that at least the best years of youth would be sheltered from the disintegrating activity of the new principles. The Catholic or Christian youth who, even in the midst of the errors of an education in many respects defective and sectarian, had felt within them the desire for purity and moral energy, and had come to respect the seriousness and sanctity of life, became attached to the doctrines, the rites, the exterior discipline, in which their experience had shown them that substantial aid lay for this moral growth.

And this explains, even without having recourse to pragmatist doctrines, the religion of many young people. Once given a personal faith in a pure and lofty ideal of life, this faith spontaneously falls back upon the means which seem necessary to attain the end. In reflection, in cold investigation, in criticism, is seen the enemy lying in wait and seeking to penetrate the lines of defence which must be held. Better believe confidently and await, upheld by the old supports, the edification of one's own inner I. The witness of life, given to the ancestral worship,

becomes a witness of truth before which the presumption of the new doctrine falls. And this educative power is surely a great merit of the churches and of the Christian tradition, and opens up to us the way to judge of what is vital and permanent in them, and of the varying value of the accumulations which history, in the course of the ages, has superimposed upon the first teaching.

IV. THE DEFENCE OF PERSONALITIES

The Christian tradition has met of late years another and perhaps a more dangerous enemy in critical idealism. Much less fit than materialism to become popular and be transformed into a practicable doctrine, it had in its favor an admirable dialectical power and the fact that it was a great vindication of the spirit, valuable because achieved in the name, not of uncertain and miraculous revelations, but of human reason itself. Critical idealism in the fulness of its expression, having overcome the cautious reserves of Immanuel Kant, dissolved the exterior world into the ego and the ego into the universal Self, the Spirit which, as the All in all and in every concrete manifestation, transcends itself and so becomes. The moral precept of this doctrine is: Be the spirit; that is, transfuse your ephemeral and phenomenal will into the universal will which ascends by transcending itself and is evermore making itself clear and conscious in history. But the spirit is here not an absolute ideal and a full perfection, placed above, and therefore in a manner outside of, the concrete motives of our practical action, so as to be the cause as well as the end,—namely, through being joined to the concrete will as a norm that transcends it and forces it to come forth from itself. Moreover, this absolute becoming is all history and all praxis, and therefore justifies in its own way all history and all praxis as consecutive and dialectically determined moments of all becoming. For these reasons this coldly dialectical and in its way monistic and deterministic idealism does not contain moral teaching that can save men, nor can it be a religion. For in it perfection appears as immensely remote, being at the end of all history, while at the same time immensely near and within reach, but in minute forms which need to be transcended almost before

they are attained,—a process which only a state of continual becoming permits.

Some thinkers, whose influence is today on the increase, have sought to save personality, human and divine, from the insidious dialectic formalism of this doctrine; but their undertaking is naturally difficult because of the necessary subtlety of their reasoning, which can only with difficulty be translated into a practical rule of life.

Here also, then, we have one of the great merits of Christianity, the merit of preserving the postulates necessary for life and for training in spiritual and moral liberty,—namely, the belief in a divine personality as the measure and goal of perfection, and in human personality. In order that man may feel the moral responsibility that weighs upon him, and may feel the duty and ideal beauty of making himself and of possessing his soul, it is necessary that he feel himself capable of this, as being his own master; that is, that he feel himself able and in duty bound to withdraw his life from the coil of infinite possibilities which are developing around him and in him, and which are autonomous or victorious only if he know not how to direct them; that he place himself alone face to face with the Absolute, and feel as his own, irreducibly his own, this life which he is training and wills to master.

Great are the difficulties of these affirmations, if they be understood as philosophical positions; not indeed because dialectical metaphysics excludes them (and we cannot undertake here to show that it does not)—for then the cause would be lost; but through the subtlety of the concepts which it is necessary to employ and of the affirmations, with difficulty intelligible to our thought—thought moulded, as it were, of time and space, and incapable of recognizing intuitively the spirit as a concrete entity. And on this account faith is necessary,—faith, which theoretic reason must abstain from contradicting, and which practical reason justifies with all the weight of the demands of life.

Now this, let us repeat, is the great merit of Christianity: it places before us the divine personality and the individuality of our everlasting soul, whose “hope is full of immortality,” as fundamental doctrines and as objects of faith; and “faith is the

substance of things hoped for," that is, it *accepts* as much as it *wills*, and justifies itself by itself, in so far as it is already a lively adherence to the divine principles of the life that reveals itself within us.

How the absolute reality that escapes clear apprehension corresponds to this faith, how this hope is to be realized beyond time and beyond space, we know not; and it is possible for us today to wonder at the sobriety of the gospel message, which contents itself with a few popular images, and to laugh at the pretensions of the theologians and the devout, who know so much and have received so many messages from the dead, and who grant reductions of punishment and accelerations of grace and blessedness. And we must not forget, although the charge is often exaggerated, that the hope in the hereafter became a marvellous source of lucre and of power when religion was made the encourager of selfish fears and pretexts, accustomed as these were to hope from "good deeds" what they did not dare ask for from "doing good,"—which ought to be understood as an inner bent of mind towards purification and love. But, brought back though they be to their necessary sobriety, these two "dogmas" still preserve their fundamental character, and remain the fundamental basis of Christianity, which may be summed up in three principles: God the father; the absolute value of the individual soul; life according to the ethical teaching of the Christ as the soul's way to God.

V. CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY

We have alluded to Christ and the divine worth of his teaching; but just here arise in Christianity the greatest difficulties. For the Christian religion is not merely belief in the realm of spirits, but likewise faith in Christ, the revealer and intercessor, the way to truth and life. A Christianity without Christ, without a society in which faith in him is, as it were, the soul and the binding force, without the life in Christ, or the life of Christ in the soul, of which Saint Paul spoke, would be evidently quite another thing: no longer a positive, revealed, transcendent religion, and above all no longer this religion, with its characteristic tradition and doctrines and rites.

Now there is reason for asking ourselves if the idea of the historic Christ, as it emerges from the most recent criticism, can still support the weight of so much faith and of the venerable structures that rest upon it. With historical trustworthiness denied to the account of the infancy and of the resurrection, as they are narrated by the Synoptic Gospels, and to all the Fourth Gospel, with the miracles in large part gone, and the value of the testimony to all of them shaken, with the teaching of Christ stripped of the reflex influences of a later faith which had already in part transfigured the Master and his history, with the relation between the church and its founder changed, and with the eschatological character of the announcement of the Kingdom made prominent,—it seems as if the Christ fashioned by the theologians, their God incarnate, the Word of God made flesh, melted away. His message and work, at first enveloped in a divine nimbus, again strike their root deep into history,—into that history which preceded and prepared the way for them, and into that which has so quickly and so profoundly modified them.

It is obviously proper, then, to ask ourselves if the doctrine of the Christ may not owe its good fortune to a most singular historical coincidence; whether, that is, the pure flower of Jewish wisdom, matured in a grievous intensity of expression from the anguish of the Hebrew people, blooming at the moment when the Roman world was fusing together into one great circle of life all anxieties and all aspirations, and nourished by the best sap from oriental rites, from Hellenic thought, and from Roman discipline, did not cast its seeds upon a soil that absorbed them eagerly and was quick to make them germinate; whether the obscure and humble proclaimer of the Kingdom, slain by the Romans, exalted then in the glory of a marvellous unforeseen flowering-forth of the faith excited by him, did not almost by chance give his name to a movement which the religious consciousness of the age was carrying in its womb and which appeared at the opportune moment. Thus today we should have to rest content with the substance of that faith, vindicated by an immanent process of revelation of the divine to the religious consciousness, and leave to one side the wrappings, corroded by time and by criticism.

Some observations are here necessary.

And first this, that the divinity of the Christ is the work of faith itself. When his message is taken as the *absolute* of the religious consciousness, and the Christ as its proclaimer, and the mind abandons itself trustingly thereto, not as to an abstract doctrine, but as to a living thought of the Absolute palpitating in mortal flesh, and lives it out in its turn in faith, hope, and charity, then message and proclaimer become for faith one and the same thing, the latter being the very life of the former. *If the doctrine of Christ is true, Christ is God through faith.* And that which is of value here is no longer the details, nor even the particular form of expectancy or of historical illusion which the doctrine assumed in the thought of the Christ,³ but its fitness to become the living and operative norm for the religious consciousness; a fitness that is proved by faith, which then suffices of itself and asks no other proof.

If the first generations of believers knew not how to understand this living truth of the doctrine without the miracles of the nativity and of the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, if they were led to formulate so complex and artificial a christology, that was not their faith, but the effective reflection of their faith upon the minds and culture of the age. Nor is it permissible to declare the faith false because it formulated and took on certain transitory forms of expression; but it is expedient to investigate whether its vitality is indeed permanent and whether, with changed modes of thought, and with the corresponding change in the aptitude of the spirit to invent suitable expressions and in the aids which are at its disposal for this purpose, it still has the force and virtue to create for itself new, and more nearly true, forms of understanding and of representation, which shall be to the preceding forms as the spirit is to the letter. In other words, we do not deny the divinity of the message and of its proclaimer, even if the latter was not born of a virgin, and neither spoke nor acted in his mortal life as the Fourth Gospel says he

³I have shown elsewhere that the eschatological announcement of the Christ has no internal and necessary connection with his moral doctrine, and that it could be the spontaneous and necessary form of a religious announcement which desired to surmount the peculiar contingencies of time and space and to place the human consciousness face to face with the absolute and the eternal, with a vigorous withdrawal from the contingent and the occasional.

did, and does not correspond adequately to the Hellenic conception of the Logos, and so forth; but we shall seek—nor is it perhaps difficult to do so—to declare and understand the divinity in the way in which our historic culture and our philosophic thought permit, affirming the fundamental fact that his doctrine appears to us as the religious Absolute become man's living, throbbing thought. Nor, even when the history of the Christ is scrupulously reduced to its most certain data, is there anything in it which contradicts this interpretation.

In other words, we do not believe that the belief in the divinity of the Christ, in so far as it is the axis and basis of every Christianity which is truly such, adds any special philosophical difficulty to that which is contained in the two affirmations made above. Given the reality of the world of consciousnesses as distinct realities and as irreducible vital subjects; given the reality of the absolute spirit, complete in the possession of itself; given, finally, the immanent action of this spirit in the world of those consciousnesses, by acting in whom it truly becomes; given all this, and the function which, in the history of these relations, has been attributed to the Christ by faith, is not repugnant to any certitude, historical or philosophical.

VI. THEOLOGY AND ORTHODOXY

But as soon as we leave such fundamental positions and descend to details, it becomes much harder to advance. We shall certainly not indulge here in long discussions on this or that particular of doctrine or ritual in controversy between the Catholic and Protestant churches (we cannot say that outside of these there are any discussions about positions commonly admitted by all Christians) nor take up generally all the complex mass of doctrinal and ritual positions over which "orthodoxy" watches,—positions in which Christianity has come to embody and define itself. It may, however, be affirmed in general terms that the moment is a sad one, and the peril great, for every form of orthodoxy.

If Christianity, from the beginning and afterward, had been above all things the practice of the Christian precept of goodness

and love, and had developed more as a religion of the spirit and of liberty than as an ecclesiastical institution, doctrinal quarrels and heresies would have had much less part in it, and its vicissitudes would have been different. But whatever the causes,—and a prominent one was surely the rapidly increasing importance of the ecclesiastical element,—in practice the Christian communities soon began to give great importance, more and more rapidly increasing, to doctrine. Faith, a living soul, was changed into a body of doctrine, under favor of which was invoked the authority of tradition, as expressed by the fathers, by the liturgies, by the councils, by the *consensus ecclesiarum*.

As long as Christianity was young, and the doctrines deemed necessary were relatively few, dispute was based on documents and proofs. As time went on, an historical centre of reference and a peremptory authority became necessary, and the papacy took a hand in the game of this *unitas fidei*; but although with the progress of events an increasing obedience was rendered to Rome, nevertheless the theology of the classic age always harked back directly to the great fountains of doctrine in the universities, in the monasteries, in the councils; and the thought of Rome was valid only in proportion as it is trustworthily shown to be really the thought of the fathers, of the canons, of the churches. No one, therefore, held himself really bound to the thought of a pope; but every one felt himself one with a great historic tradition, going back to Christ, made illustrious by the fathers, confirmed by the councils, living in the teaching of the doctors, sustained by the *consensus ecclesiarum*. Hence it was not possible, and would not have sufficed, for Rome to have an official doctrine of its own,—it was not until a very advanced period that Rome had a university; if there had appeared officialdom, that is, subjection to absolute authority, the enchantment would have been broken. It was necessary that doctrine be in intimate accord with the culture of the age; that approach to the Roman theology be made by all the ways of the trivium and quadrivium, and that this theology be surrounded with all the prestige of a science, proceeding, indeed, by authority, but from a divine authority, the wonderful documents of which were at the dis-

posal of all and were only waiting to be seriously consulted. In this circle of intellectual life the authority of the pope is in its fit place as that of a prime minister of tradition and of culture; in this great historic unity of traditions, of norms, of interpretation, the *regula fidei* is transmitted throughout a whole world of culture.

Today matters are distressingly complicated through the deep schism made between theology and science as early as the seventeenth century. Against Protestantism and its chief doctrines it was still possible laboriously to pile up traditions, canons, doctors, by means of a vast deal of evidence that came, or seemed to come, from the entire church; it was the last time, and success was possible only amid tremendous difficulties. On the other hand, Protestantism could still determine the *regula fidei* from the Bible, in which was still seen the written evidence of a miraculous external revelation, to which it seemed irreverent to add external criteria of interpretation; the word of God, printed in visible form, was within the reach of every soul. Today, thanks to the extraordinary enrichment of our methods of critical and historical research, we read with a very different eye all the ancient evidences,—the Bible, the fathers, the councils, and the doctors. The evidence which to the eyes of the men of olden time sprang an integral whole from the system of a miraculous revelation appears as a slow process of historic formation, linked in a thousand ways to the complex development of human culture, into which flow from numerous sources both stimuli and forms. The labor of interpretation is strangely complex and difficult. The alteration is so profound, the human history of doctrines and rites at many points so clear, that upon almost no precise point of formulated, established doctrine is it possible to concentrate the harmonious light of the evidence, to establish the *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*.

Official theology is in incurable discord with modern critical investigation, whose methods and results it ignores and, ignoring, condemns. And the pope is alienated from that world of culture and authority in which he was once in his fit place. His authority becomes either ambiguous—recall to mind certain documents of Leo XIII on the Biblical question—or ridiculous, as soon as

it loses its lordship over scientific methods and becomes a question, not of theses or counter-theses, but of shades of interpretation. The *consensus ecclesiarum* is meaningless, since all the bishops of Roman Catholicism have learned their slender stock of theology on the school-benches or in the manuals of Rome. Even practical reforms appear arbitrary, often anti-liturgical, and give rise to a vast chorus of recrimination.

Upon official theology are imposed, along with an oath to maintain certain reserves, definite restrictions of method, fixed conclusions even in matters which depend upon critical investigation: the *argumenta credibilitatis*, the proof of the *preambula fidei*, which at first were referred with confidence to reason, are today guarded, forced, maimed by a suspicious theology, which does not trust free criticism, but finds in it its most dreaded and dangerous adversary. Theological teaching is stricken unto death by the anti-modernist oath.

To these difficulties answer is made by exaggerating the pontifical authority beyond all credence; the more it becomes personal and arbitrary, through lack of traditional supports, the more it is imposed; and not merely in theological, but even in economical and political matters it is attempted to make the pope's personal thought and command an incontestable norm.

Thus in reality in the Catholic church,—and the same thing holds good in their degree with respect to the other churches,—the orthodox are no more, and orthodoxy is no more. Whoever blindly follows authority has no longer a guarantee against the caprice of one man; whoever studies, investigates, and forms judgments by personal effort, necessarily reaches conclusions which do not correspond to any pre-established type, and which modify and deform, or else elude, the old-time formula, since over the means of investigation the churches no longer exercise any effective control, while uniformity of doctrine becomes meagre with the slow rise and prevalence and decay of particular doctrines and of their various forms. The unity of the faith, if by the faith we understand theology, has therefore become definitively impossible; there will remain the *fides cum operibus*, faith as ethical guidance, the expression of a religious enthusiasm, a practical bond of action.

VII. THE CATHOLICISM OF CHARITY

The conclusion of all that we have just said is evident; and it is the forecast of the end of orthodoxies. It is becoming impossible to justify by the authority of a miraculous revelation of God any doctrinal points whatever which form part of theological systems and confessions, for these are now seen to have been formed in the vast, complex cycle of human culture by a logical process, and one which we can reconstruct.

So also it is perhaps impossible to wish to sanction by the prestige of immediate divine institution any part of the ritual, as it is now practised in the churches. Even in respect of the two or three rites through which we go back directly to the Christ, it is not difficult to show that they were different in the beginning, and had in the thought of the founder a different value. If orthodoxy, the unity of the faith as it has been inculcated by the official theologians, were a necessity of the churches, then, such orthodoxy being impracticable, the end of the churches would be near, and would arrive coincidentally with the education and elevation of man's intelligence to the mastery of his own thinking and the government of his own inner life. The theologians will certainly be the last to be persuaded of this; but they should find food for reflection in the fact that they had to define modernism simply as the most baneful of all heresies, precisely because it was not possible to fix and define it as a determinate heresy. The entire theological system, torn from its base, afloat, an enormous rootless mass of parasitic vegetation, is going adrift.

But let us understand one another. This cannot mean that doctrine and ritual must now henceforth be abandoned. If the message of Christ lives, if Christ lives in the consciousness of those who follow him and in the united body of believers, if Christianity, sprung from the deepest recesses of the religious consciousness where the Spirit has its activity, is a religion that persists and renews itself, then doctrine and ritual are necessary in order that religion may not suffer interruption or arrest,—necessary as vehicles of substantial faith, as a pedagogic system

of religious training, as institutes and instruments of life and of collective action.

The difference will be this, that doctrine, instead of being the supreme criterion, will henceforth be—and for that matter always ought to have been—subject to another and a loftier criterion,—charity, the life in Christ. Formal orthodoxy will be practically renounced. The practical, proper aims of a religious community—purity of life, the elevation of consciences, the exercise of brotherly love—will acquire a dominant importance. Much will be forgiven those who love much. Those most fervid in faith, in good deeds, in sacrifice, will be adjudged the best. An attitude of fraternal sympathy will take the place of the actual theological hatred and the jealousies and rivalries of sects. Looking to the fruits of the doctrines more than to their formulas, men will give up entirely the vain attempt—a practical denial of God—to impose a faith or insidiously to suggest it, and will not use the fetters of interest to hold back men's consciences from changing a compromised religion. The professional importance of the clergy will diminish enormously, when religion shall cease to be the mechanical repetition of rites and formulas, but shall of necessity have sprung from the living breath of the Spirit, which "bloweth where it listeth." The church as teacher and the church as learner, today so sharply divided, will again be fused together, for teaching will be practised—in accordance with the principle which Christ indicated and which, later forgotten, is reappearing in all modern pedagogy—as a being again made little with the little children in order to lead them into the possession of the truth and of themselves, until teacher and teaching become unnecessary.

Christianity and Catholicism, as historic institutions, will thus have to be considered as the development and expression, in a form in many respects transitory, of an eternal doctrine of life. This doctrine endures and at the same time develops, and, in the progress of human culture, enters into profound and vital connection with all the active energies of civilization as a grand pedagogic system for the formation of the divine life in human consciousness. Respect for this living, profound soul will make us respectful toward the forms and institutions which have trans-

mitted it to us, and the desire for it will permit us to guide our experience among them, letting go what has lost its efficacy and value, revivifying and renewing the intimate significance of what can still be a way to the living Christ.

For the welfare of Christianity it would be good that Pius X were the last pope of orthodoxy, of excommunications, of syllabuses, of condemnations. A pope who was unwilling to continue and renew these errors would be bound to apply himself to calming theological contests, inducing men to forget the faults and errors of recent times, calling attention to the few most important and decisive points of doctrine and practice, to making Christianity avail and live through all that which can still be its strength and efficacy. With the slow detaching and falling away from the ancient tree of every leaf that is withered, many hostile prejudices and many reasons for dissension would disappear, and Christianity, a spontaneous and living union of free churches, could aspire to be the religion, not perhaps, for a long time to come, of multitudes or of entire peoples, but of elect souls, athirst for goodness and for sacrifice, desirous of aiding one another as brethren in a vast communion of purposes and endeavors, in a work of spiritual light and good.